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AUTHOR Clark, John A.
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ABSTRACT

This monograph analyzes the philosophical foundations of research into the administration of educational organizations. The first part reviews past debates about the philosophical foundations of research in educational administration, focusing on three contending schools of thought: the empiricists, the phenomenologists, and the critical theorists. The second part addresses ontological and epistemological assumptions about social reality--a continuum ranging from idealists who believe each person creates his/her own world to realists who believe in an objective world. The third part defines the nature of educational organizations from two interdependent frames of reference: systems theory, which illuminates the structures essential to the stability of an organization; and interpretive theory, which focuses on the subjective experience and understanding of the members of an organization. An argument is developed for an integration of the two approaches. In the fourth part, the author provides his own view of the epistemological foundations of knowledge about educational organizations, suggesting that objective and intersubjective (or communicative) indicators are both necessary for a clear understanding of organizational life, since both actions and observations are given meaning only within the context of the theoretical concepts held about them by observers and participants alike. The final section addresses the link between research knowledge and administrative praxis in educational organizations, suggesting an active role for the researcher as a mediator of knowledge and action. (TE)

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John A. Clark

Education Department

Massey University

Palmerston North

New Zealand

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The Philosophical Foundations of Research into the Administration of Educational Organizations.

Debate about the philosophical foundations of research into the administration of educational organizations has focussed on a number of fundamental and interwoven problems including the nexus of ontological and epistemological assumptions about social reality, the nature of educational organizations, the epistemological structure of our knowledge about their administration, and the connection between such knowledge and administrative practice. It is towards a coherent answer to these problems that this inquiry is directed.

The Philosophical Foundations of Research in Educational Administration: The Anatomy of a Debate

The on-going debate about the philosophical foundations of research in educaitonal administration is vastly more complex and dynamic than presented here. A number of broad philosophical positions have emerged and through their interaction and critique developed beyond their initial formulations. However, all that is sought here is a brief clarification of the particular context out of which this inquiry has arisen.

Prior to 1950, research in educational administration was firmly rooted in an empiricist tradition. Educational organizations were thought of in everyday terms as institutions concerned with the learning-teaching process. Knowledge about their administration was derived from immediate experience with raw observations held together

by induction. As Griffiths has noted, "the researcher has an idea that a vaguely defined problem needs to be solved. He collects data through a questionnaire, survey or some other method and attempts to find an answer by 'looking at the data'. By following this procedure we have amassed tons of data, but have come up with very few answers."(1) Consequently, practical conclusions as guides to administrative action were characterised by an undifferentiated unity of fact and value often consisting of little more than "a description of practices, the cautious recommendation of promising techniques, personal success stories and lively anecdotes all surrounded with the aura of common sense."(2) Such a state of affairs was perhaps not surprising given that those who engaged in and supervised research tended to be recruited from the ranks of school administrators more skilled in the practice of their profession than research into it.

Rejection of 'naked empiricism' come in the early 1950s with the rise of the 'theory movement'. Common sense thought gave way to abstract theory. An empiricist position was taken on the connection between ontological and epistemological assumptions about social reality: a real world exists, independent of knowers, but limited by our knowledge of it.(3) As a consequence, educational organizations were conceptualized as social systems with their administration directed at systems maintenance. Such systems were both purposive and in need of human agents.(4) Knowledge about such organizations was grounded in the tenets of logical positivism: with the strict separation of the 'is' and the 'ought', knowledge was redefined to mean empirical knowledge obtained through hypothetico - deductive

inquiry conducted in accordance with the criteria of science, particularly objectivity, reliability and operationalism. Empirical statements could be verified by a correspondence theory of truth leading to the description, explanation and prediction of administrator behaviour subsumed under covering laws, with epistemic privilege residing in the categorial scheme of the 'neutral and objective' observer.(5) Such knowledge was linked to administrative practice through the hypothetical-imperative 'if-then': the aim was to develop a science of administration within which the consequences of alternative courses of action could be established although the course to be followed could only be derived from the administrator's value system.(6) Despite their softening on some aspects, present day researchers still continue to re-affirm their belief in the validity of the basic principles of positivism as they were laid down some thirty years ago.

The challenge to positivist research in educational administration began to emerge in the mid 1970s. Idealism - what is real is that which is held to be real - was promoted as an alternative philosophical account. Thus, educational organizations were reconceptualised as social inventions composed of the multiple realities grounded in the specific meanings of the members who constitute them, whilst their administration was seen as the process of facilitation to deal with organizational conflict. Facts and values were re-united, while knowledge was relativised; since there can be no direct access to an external reality, competing accounts of organizational reality cannot be judged to be objectively true or

false. Rather, all accounts are held to be subjectively true, for epistemic privilege resides in the categorial schemes of the members of the organization. The point of such research is to provide a theoretical interpretation of the ways in which the members understand their social life, with the validity of the interpretation being grounded in the member's meanings. Thus, knowledge is linked to practice through the researcher seeking to reveal to the participants how their beliefs shape the administrative actions they take within their perceived realities.(7)

The continuing clash and polarisation of these two philosophical positions has done much to reveal their respective strengths and weaknesses.(8) On the positivist side there is merit in the stress on organizational structure and empirical knowledge although the reification of organizations and the scientisation of knowledge must be rejected. Similarly, the phenomenological emphasis on human agency and meaningful understanding is important but this is seriously undermined by mentalism and epistemological relativism.

The recent appearance of a third philosophical position, critical theory, has sought to retrieve the merits yet transcent the limitations of both positivism and phenomenology. With the appropriation of Habermasian thought, educational organizations are conceptualised as speech communites with their administration being a set of practices concerned with the control, direction and development of the institution. This allows for the incorporation of hermeneutic, structural and critical elements in the research programme.

> The phenomenological approach can be incorporated insofar as it allows one to investigate how meaning about the organisation is inter-subjectively communicated and created; the structural approach is necessary because it allows investigation of the "grammar" of the institution, or the structural features that hold the meaningful system together; the critical dimension is necessary because it asks in what ways does the institutional structure contribute to the distortion of communication between individuals.(9)

Knowledge is underpinned by a consensus theory of truth; both knowledge and action are united in praxis so as to reveal the conditions of ideology and through self-understanding bring about the possible eradication of structures of domination through emancipatory action guided by the principles of truth, justice and equality.(10)

Critical theory in educational administration has itself become the object of critique, not only from empiricists (11) but also from a new direction, that of pragmatism-materialism.(12) For the latter, the real world consists of sense perceptible qualities which are knowable. Although no clear conception of educational organizations has emerged, the physicalist nature of this position entails that the distinction between social and natural phenomena is one of a qualitative difference of degree, not of kind. Knowledge about administration rests on a pragmatist epistemology, being free to draw on whatever theories appear useful which are underpinned by a coherence theory of evidence. However, the connection between knowledge and action is clear: "The connecting principles which link different phenomena together are laws whose interrelation, in turn, form a system, or

science. It follows that any administrator who knows the system and its laws possesses a powerful tool for observing, interpreting, and ultimately, changing, what goes on in educational practice."[13]

The Nexus of Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions About Social Reality.

The question of the relationship between reality and our conceptions of it has been one of the most basic and troublesome questions in philosophy. So too in educational administration, for as Griffiths[14] has pointed out, on the ontological question the continuum ranges from idealists who believe each person creates his/her own world to realists who believe in an objective world, while epistemologically there are the positivists at one end who seek regularities and causal relations, and at the other end subjectivists who deny the existence of laws or underlying regularities in the social world. Willower[15] dismisses the debates on realist versus idealist metaphysics as not being very helpful, but he misses the very point of what is being debated.

> The dispute between realists and anti-realists is of vital importance in philosophy. The very fact that the same issue can reappear in so many different contexts is significant. The same controversy is bound to be relevant in every area where man's understanding of the world and his place in it is in question. Is what he understands distinct from his understanding of it? Do his concepts and language enable him to discover the world or even perhaps in some sense to create it? The physical scientist and the social scientist both have to grapple with the same problem, and the answer they give has a direct bearing on the purpose of their disciplines.[16]

For the idealist, the notion that there is a self-subsisting reality independent of our conception of it, is of little importance, for even if there is such a reality we cannot gain direct access to it. A reality we can know nothing about is not much different from no reality at all. Rather, reality is what people believe it to be, and in so far as they construct their realities as they see fit, then there can be multiple realities with different people living in different worlds. Since no criterion of an external reality is available against which the truth or falsity of the various realities can be judged, all realities (provided they are internally consistent) are held to be true. Thus, the distinction between reality and our conception of it collapses into reality being that which it is thought to be.

But such a thesis gives rise to a number of serious objections. If every person's account is held to be true, such that none can be false, then this precludes the possibility of their ever being mistaken in their beliefs about their circumstances. However, people are often mistaken, a state of affairs which they themselves can readily acknowledge. More seriously, once it is admitted that all beliefs and theories are created by the social context with their truth being relative to the judgements of particular individuals and groups then idealists, as the Whites[17] argue, must in all consistency be reflexive and apply their criteria to their own accounts. As a consequence, the idealists' insights are themselves merely particular constructions of reality. Thus, their analyses have no greater validity than those they reject. Relativism runs rampant.

Finally, if researchers are bound to the acceptance of all realities being true, then the question must be asked, what are they investigating? What is the point of obtaining these multiple realities if we can make no assessment of their truth or do anything with them? It is a puzzle why researchers engage in research if there is nothing real apart from their thought and the thoughts of those they investigate. Clearly, idealism will not do.

For the empiricist, the connection between reality and our conception of it is assumed to have a more objective basis rooted in observation. However, the crucial question facing main-stream researchers in educational administration is the objectivity of the reality to which our thoughts correspond. Empiricism starts with what we know and tries to work from there so that reality is defined by our knowledge and experience of it. The emphasis on intersubjective agreement on repeatable data appears to give empiricism a solid foundation, but here too, difficulties abound. While private experience forms the base through individual's observations, an emphasis on intersubjectivity makes empiricism very pre-occupied with what is publicly accessible. How the two are reconciled is far from clear. But the result of the verificationist analysis which limits what is to be counted as real to what is publicly accessible is to render the existence of parts of the social and physical worlds problematic by denying the existence of the non-material or the non-observable. Since, for the empiricist, reality must be experienced if the notion of correspondence between reality and our conceptions of it is to be meaningful, then correspondence with an experienced reality

is a necessary criterion of truth, thus 'reality' is empirical reality as discovered by the sciences[18]. Truth is restricted to what in principle researchers can find out; truth without the possibility of its recognition is meaningless for the empiricist since truth and falsity are meangful only when we have the means of verification. Thus, the empiricist's insistence on observation is misguided in so far as it makes observation the only basis of theory for it entails that we can have no theories about what is unobservable, thus excluding much of reality. So, the empiricist account of the connection between reality and our knowledge of it will not do either.

The materialist alternative holds that the real world is made up of sense-perceptible qualities; social and natural phenomena differ in degree rather than kind such that matter is understood in the sense that 'matter' is used in the natural sciences. Conceptions of reality are embedded in whole theories, the truth of which depends on the coherence of evidence mustered. Since all epistemologies are on a par, the theory of knowledge is continuous with natural science[19]. Materialism is not without its own difficulties. The notion that reality consists of nothing more than sense data sets a priori limits on reality while the collapse of the distinction between natural and social phenomena raises questions about how mental life and human actions are to be characterised. Neither of these are adequately addressed. If our conceptions of what is real are located in whole theories, the truth of which are determined by their internal coherence, then this is no answer to the question of their truth at all. Since coherence means nothing more than that the elements of a

theory are all consistent with one another and with the criteria internal to the theory, truth is internal to the theory with all the dangers that relativism entails. Coherence alone cannot tell us whether a theory provides a true or false account of reality; it is only when at least some of the elements of a theory are related in some way to that which they purport to say something about that a theory can be assessed true or false. Truth might be a property of sentences, but what makes sentences true is not their coherence with other sentences but whether things are the way they say they are. By equating epistemology with science,thus rejecting an epistemology superior to science, leaves materialism with the problem of showing how such a view can itself be justified. Does it fall within the account of science provided by the materialists? Clearly not, for it is not sense-perceptible. Unlike the logical positivists, the materialist cannot even appeal to logic. So, what is the epistemological status of this knowledge claim? Since it falls outside the realm of science then it is a candidate for a superior epistemology; such being the case, then the principle is self-refuting. All of this being so, then so too must materialism be rejected as an adequate basis for research in educational administration.

This leaves us with realism. For the realist, the insistence that reality and our theories about it must be distinct means that ontological and epistemological questions must be kept separate. What there is and our conceptions of it are logically distinct. Reality is self-subsisting: material reality is not dependent on mind while

reality encompasses more than the material. Accordingly, reality is not limited to what is accessible to science. If what exists is self-subsisting, then what is real does not depend on observation for it to be what it is. It is what it is, and can exist without anyone knowing, or being is a position to know, anything about it. Reality is thus constituted by that which is observable and describable, and that which is unobservable and describable and that which is unobservable and undescribable. What is objectively so for the realist is that which has some kind of independent existence apart from man's conception of it. Man's social relations may not exist wholly apart from man, but they can have an existence apart from our conceptions of them, thus providing a grounding for the concept of false consciousness. While it is obvious that we cannot conceive of reality except by conceiving it, this does not entail the conclusion that we have no way of knowing whether our conceptions are in error. That we cannot know the world but through our theories of it does not negate the view that some of our theories may be true. If one theory is correct and another not, then the world will be as the first theory says it is and not as the second would have it. Thus, realism is committed to the view that either reality is as the theory says it is or it is not.

In order for statements about the world to be true, they must correspond with the world. Realism does not require any particular view about the kind of correspondence; what it does entail is that true theories are true because of the nature of reality. The version of correspondence so evident in educational administration holds that

truth is a relation between what is said and a fact or a state of affairs in the world. There is thought to be a correspondence between a statement as something in the world (speech episode) and a fact as something else in the world (person, thing, event) to which the statement corresponds. Thus a distinction is drawn between statements and facts. However, the trouble with this formulation of correspondence is the misrepresentation of 'correspondence between statement and fact' as a relation between events or things.

So, how is truth to be construed? It is the sentences we utter or write which make statements and it is the statements which are true or false, not sentences. That to which the statement refers is that which the statement is about, but statements correspond to the facts and not to the thing that the statement is about. Thus, there are three category types: (i) sentences which are spoken or written, (ii) objects in the world, and (iii) statements and facts taking the form of 'stating a fact'. What makes a statement true is the fact it states but the fact it states is not something in the world, for while statements are about objects they state facts. There is no such thing called 'a statement' (although there is the making of a statement when we utter or write it) and there is not such thing called 'a fact' (although there are objects in the world) which stand to one another in any soort of relation. Facts are known, learned, forgotten, and so on; unlike people and events they are not seen, heard, interrupted, changed, etc. So, facts are what statements (when true) state, they are not what statements are about. Thus, facts are not things in the world; if the statements are prized off from the world so too are the

facts, but the world that the statements are about is not prized off. What is true is not the sentence uttered but what it states.(20)

Correspondence includes correspondence with a reality never discovered or experienced such that statements are true or false whether we find out or not. A meaningful sentence is true or false regardless of whether we can decide or not. Thus, we need to distinguish between the truth of a statement, knowledge of the truth of a statement, and our conception of how that knowledge is possible.

The social world is what a true theory says it is. It is the task of a researcher in educational administration to obtain a conceptual scheme which corresponds to the nature of that social reality. What is the case is so whether the researcher perceives it or not. What is so about something is not necessarily changed merely because we obtain knowledge of it. The logical relationship between knower and known does not rule out the possibility that the researcher may causally influence the subject (members of an educational organization) for the researcher may not be able to obtain knowledge of the organization without interfering with the organization in ways which substantially alter it. But this kind of causal interaction is not to be confused with the logical relation. This is not to deny the importance of the former, for there are endless difficulties when the activity of the researcher influences the members of an organization. Nevertheless, the researcher's task is to understand the nature of the organization apart from his influence, at least as an initial step in the research programme.

So, contrary to Willower, it should be evident that the stand a researcher takes on the nature of reality and our conception of it is a significant determinant of the way research is conceived and engaged in. However, the only defendable position which can be adopted is that of realism.

The Nature of Educational Organizations

The identity of educational organizations can be regarded from two interdependent frames of reference. From the perspective of systems theory, identity focusses on the structures essential to the stability and maintenance of an organization, while from the viewpoint of interpretive theory the identity of an organization can be grasped as it is experienced and understood by the members of the organization. To rely exclusively on one or the other is to be mistaken about the nature of educational organizations. What is needed is the integration of the two approaches.

> If the paradigm of systems theory is reduced to that of the life-world of action theory, the issues of systems steering and control of essential structures are screened out; investigations stay at the level of common sense or everyday knowledge of social processes. If, on the other hand, there is an attempt to reduce the life-world to a systems theoretic approach, we are faced with the danger of losing sight of the realisation that social reality is constituted through the meaningful interaction of social agents who, in the last instance, determine the tolerance levels of social conditions[21].

Educational organizations are constituted by two mutually presupposing elements - agency and structure. However, both concepts need to be reworked; in analytic philosophy action theory is largely detached from structural explanation and institutional transformation,

while functionalist sociology with its emphasis on structure excludes certain essential features of action thereby according priority to the organization and reducing the members of the organization to little more than social dupes.

Since organizations have spatial and temporal dimensions the conceptualisation of the acts, intentions, purposes, reasons, etc, of members of an educational organization must be located in time, in the flow of day to day activity. Agency is a continuous flow of conduct where action has reference to the activities of members intervening in the 'being' of the organization. All action, whether it be what members do or say or write, is intentional although this does not mean that the members necessarily have these intentions consciously in mind while they are engaged in the activities.

If requested, the accounts members give of their conduct draws upon the same stocks of knowledge and understanding as are drawn upon in the production of their actions, but while in some cases the rules which are constitutive of their actions can be formulated discursively, in other cases they cannot and remain at the level of practical consciousness. This does not mean that they do not know the rules which guide their action and enable them to continue to act; clearly they do for all action is rule governed. What it does mean is that they cannot state the rules which govern what they do. Thus, the reflexive monitoring of behaviour within an interactive organizational context proceeds at two levels: (i) the ability of members to explain why they act as they do by giving reasons for their conduct; and (ii) by knowing how to produce and reproduce acts through a practical consciousness of the rules.

However, the reasons the members of an educational organization may give for their actions in the course of practical queries may stand in contrast to the actions as actually embodied in the flow of action taken by them. Three levels of account are possible. At the first and possibly least important level, the member may have lied by giving reasons which he knew were not the real reasons for what he did. At a second level, the reasons given may be genuinely stated, but they are not the real reasons since his actions could have been guided by the unformulated rules of his practical consciousness and thus he was honestly mistaken. At a third level, and perhaps most importantly, the reasons given are again genuine but mistaken, since the real reasons for his behaviour are to be found in the causal mechanisms of external forces of which he is unaware.

Thus, a distinction can be drawn between (i) reasons which give backing to action and are constitutive of them; and (ii) causes embedded in the conventions of institutions leading to the unacknowledged conditions of action, with such unconscious motives of actions masking the self-understanding of the members. In addition, and linked to this, the unintended consequences of intended action may form additional unconscious conditions of further action, so contributing to the reproduction of educational organizations as powerful structures of unconscious conditions of action.

The structure of an educational organization has empirical reality; however, it is not to be thought of in the same terms as the anatomy of a body or the girders of a building. Whereas the latter structures have a directly perceivable existence the structure of an

organization exists only in its instances, that is, in the patterns of interaction between the members. The social system of an educational organization is the visible pattern of interaction which embodies recurrent social practice, such as those between teachers and students in the classroom or principal and teachers in staff meetings. Structure is a logical property of systems, being the rules and resources which underpin the social practices. Rules generate practices for they provide knowledge of how things are to be said, written or done by the members of the organization. It is by way of the rules and resources that the organization is produced and reproduced in the social interaction of the members. In some cases the rules are fixed (e.g. departmental regulations),in other cases they may be so informal that they cannot be strictly defined. But they are nevertheless known for they allow the members to proceed with their activities.

The structural properties of the social system of an educational organization are both the medium and the outcome of the social practices that constitute the system. Such properties are both enabling and constraining for every process of action is a production of a new act yet at the same time all action has a continuity with the past. Thus, structure is essentially involved in the production of organizational action although it places limits on the nature of such action. As such, the rules and resources drawn upon in interaction are also reconstituted through such interaction.

Interaction is twofold. There is a social integration of face to face interaction between the members of an organization and there is the systems integration of the relations between various social groups. Underpining such interaction are rules and the ability to engage in rule-governed conduct. Two dimensions are identifiable - knowledge and norms. Knowledge encompasses the interpretive scheme concerning the communication of meaning and includes the understandings common to the parties involved in interaction. Such meaning encompasses (i) what the member means (intends to say or do, and (ii) what the meaning of his utterance or act is, as interpreted by others. Discursively, this takes the form of whether the language is used correctly or incorrectly in relation to an activity. Norms are concerned with the sancctioning of conduct, with the rightness or wrongness of modes of conduct. In sanctioning, the reactions of each party in interaction dpends upon the contingent response of the other(s); the response of one is thus a potential sanction upon the acts of the other.

Embedded in both rules and resources is power which refers to the capabilities of members (principal, HOD) to make certain accounts count and to enact or resist sanctions. Such capabilities draw upon modes of domination structured into the social system. Power is related to interaction amongst members of the organization in two inter-related ways (i) individual action, in which power is used to obtain desired outcomes and concerns the ability of the principal to achieve the outcomes where the realisation of these is dependent upon the actions of others, and (ii) institutional interaction, where it is

involved institutionally in the processes of interaction where power is drawn upon and reproduced through the activities of members in interaction. Resources which constitute structures of domination are drawn upon and reproduced as power relations in interaction through (i) authorisation - the command over members and (ii) allocation - the command over objects (money, equipment). In both instances, the principal of a school is able to exert considerable power through domination which is reporduced in the ensuing interaction of principal and staff.

It is through power that the ideological dimension of administration in educational organizations is to be found. Ideology, or the legitimation of sectional interests of the dominant groups or members, takes two forms: (i) ideology as individual action through the direct control of communication by those in the positions of domination in furthering their particular interests, and (ii) ideology as institutional interaction where symbolic meaning sustains forms of domination in the everyday interaction and lived experiences of the members. The structural elements which favour dominant interests are located in the unconscious conditions of action. The ideological dimension embedded in an organization's administration is multi-faceted, for it may include (i) representation of sectional interests as universal ones, (ii) the denial of contradictions by those in control, and (iii) the preservation of the status quo by giving social relations within the organization the appearance of being natural laws.(22)

The Epistemological Foundations of Knowledge About the Administration of Educational Organizations

The assumption that there is one, and only one, genuine form of knowledge through which we can obtain an understanding of the administration of educational organizations is false. Neither the claim by empiricists and materialists that the only source of knowledge is scientific knowledge nor the counter claim by phenomenologists that only hermenectic knowledge is valid are warranted.

The exclusive concern with science is untenable for it ignores the world of intersubjectivity and social practice on which such a science is founded. While they adhere to a programme of a unified science, empiricists and materialists are unable to recognise that there are methodological procedures appropriate to understanding interaction and intersubjectivity which differ from those used to gain knowledge of the natural and social worlds. Science is unintelligible if one cannot understand the implicit and explicit conventions and rules, or the language game or the communication community, which science presupposes. Tacit conventions about the use of words, and explicit conventions about definitions, theoretical frameworks and statements of fact imply an intersubjective consensus about meanings and practice. "Objective explanation of facts and intersubjective communication about what is to be explained are ... complementary aspects of human knowledge ... Nobody can just 'understand' without

presupposing factual knowledge which could be stated explicitly as 'explanations'. On the other hand, no natural scientist can explain anything without participating in the intersubjective communication."[23] Thus the distinction often drawn between scientific explanation and hermeneutic understanding is untenable for each is presupposed by the other: it seems readily apparent from post-Kuhnian philosophy of science that hermeneutic problems are central to all attempts to comprehend law-like regularities in social phenomena while a knowledge of regularities and a capacity for prediction are important elements of interpretive knowledge.

However, while this may establish that knowledge is dualistic in its constitution, it is not enough to provide the basis of a research programme into the administration of educational organizations. This has to be established by additional reference to the nature of educational organizations as objects of knowledge.

Agency, or human acts, can only be understood through interpretive knowledge founded in ordinary language which is the mode of intersubjectivity. Researchers who seek to interpret organizational life must recognize that they are confronting a world which is given prior meaning by those whom they wish to study. In other words, an interpretation of administrative reality must give due regard to the intersubjectivity of the action-oriented mutual understandings of the members of the organization through an apprehension of their motives, intentions, purposes and beliefs about their conduct. Language is both a carrier of meaning within the language community of an educational organization, and is intertwined

with practice. Meaning includes both intended meaning and acquired meaning which goes beyond or is in conflict with that intended. The discrepancies, if any, between the two sets of meaning can become apparent to the researcher even in cases where the member was not aware of this.

Interpretation involves the interpreter's attempt to articulate in his own language the meaning embedded in the language and conduct of the members of the organization. This involves (i) an initial interpretation as a whole which should be given the status of an hypothesis, (ii) revision of the interpretation in the light of future reflection and research, (iii) a continuous process of understanding the parts in terms of the conjectured whole, the latter being altered by a better understanding of the former, and (iv) testing the interpretation in dialogue between the researcher and the members of the organization.

Two points arise which need to be considred. Firstly, the process of interpretation has a necessary effect on the self-understanding and practice of the interpreter for there is no external standpoint outside of language upon which the interpreter can stand. Interpretations of educational organizations and their administration cannot escape the language and the preconceptions of the interpreter. Thus, there is a close relationship between the researcher, his language and the members of the organization and the effect all this has on his interpretation. The second point is that the interpretation must go beyond mere description for otherwise nothing can be said about the truth content or the ideological understanding

(deception) expressed by the members. If the interpretation always presupposes the supporting consensus and agreement of the members, then there would be no independent grounds by which to criticize the beliefs embedded in the member's accounts. While it is true that the researcher cannot stand outside of all language, this does not mean that he must necessarily stand in the language of the organization. The researcher must be able to transcend this consensus in order to discover whether the consensus is false consciousness.

Action is given meaning in language; language may be a medium of coercion and domination which conceals as well as reveals the conditions of organizational life. According to Habermas, "Language is also a medium of domination and social power: it serves to legitimate relations of organized force. In so far as the legitimations do not articulate the power relations whose institutionalization they make possible, in so far as these relations manifest themselves in legitimations, language is <u>also</u> ideological."(24) Thus a critique of the interpretation is necessary in order to comprehend the power relations embedded in the organizational processes which underpin the language used by the members of the organization not only in their practical day to day activity but also in the accounts they give to the researcher.

The structural properties of an educational organization as they bear on its administration - the rules and resources constituted as knowledge of how things are to be done with recurrent social practices organized through the application of that knowledge - are not set apart from human agency. thus, their investigation does not represent

a description of an ontologically distinct sphere of phenomena. Rather, it is an attempt to delineate another perspective on administrative reality.

Scientific knowledge has an orientation towards the prediction and control of administrative phenomena which implies generalized explanations which are grounded in terms of causal laws. It is the regularity of such practices that underpin the generation of such knowledge. This knowledge is organized conceptually as a technical language governed by identifiable rules of inference which are corrigible in the light of the results of various procedures. "Theories comprise hypothetico-deductive connections of propositions which permit the deduction of lawlike hypotheses with empirical content. The latter can be interpreted as statements about the covariance of observable events: given a set of initial conditions, they make predictions possible".(25) Thus, the theoretical structure of empirical science has the form of hypothetico-deductive explanation - particular social phenomena are conceived in terms which allow them to be subsumed under hypothetically proposed general concepts. Through the use of such concepts, knowledge is generated which makes possible the reproduction of results. Theory is tested by means of certain operations and activities including systematic observation, experimentation and measurement. To the extent that administrative action is causally produced as the effects of social forces beyond the knowledge and the control of members of the organization then it is possible to consider them in an objective, systematic manner through empirical science.

Laws do exist in the social sciences, although 'social laws' are differentiated from those 'natural laws' of the physical sciences. With reference to the administration of educational organizations, laws allude to generalizations of a causal character. Unlike natural laws which are generally held to be universal and immutable, social laws reflecting regularized social conduct "can be analyzed as involving typical sets of connections between the unacknowledged conditions of action, the rationalisation of action in the context of its purposive reflexive monitoring, and the unintended consequences of action".[26] Central to this is the knowledge the members of the organization might have about the circumstances of their action: if they have knowledge of these laws they may be able to alter their social practices thereby rendering the laws inapplicable. However, instead of regarding knowledge of social laws as a problem for the researcher in the form of self-fulfilling/negating prophecies, it should be seen as essential for ideology critique and eventual self-understanding.

Knowledge is realized in language; both our actions and our observations of actions are given meaning only within the context of the theoretical constructs or concepts that we have about them. Or, to put it another way,the actions we take are couched in terms of our reasons, intentions, purposes of what we do (or say) while our observations of action and events are given in terms of the understandings we have of them. The descriptions we offer of our actions or observations are rooted in intersubjectivity where, as Wittgenstein[27] remarked, if language is to be a form of

communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also in judgement. There must be agreement not only over what a description means but also agreement about whether a description applies to that which it refers. This entails a social context - in Habermas's terms a speech community - where argumentation is necessary to ascertain the truth of what is asserted about the administration of educational organizations for it is only through the process of rational argumentation that truth can be reached. The intersubjectivity thus required must provide for discussion which is free from all domination.

Research Knowledge and Administrative Praxis in Educational Organizations

The connection between knowledge about an educational organization and it's administration obtained through research and the practices of those who administer the organization is considerably more complex and problematic than either empiricist/materialist or interpretive researchers make out. The former, in advocating a science of administration derived from the principles of generalized findings, do little more than reproduce structures of domination while the latter through their relativist stance are unable to identify and transcend ideological coercion.

The link is to be found in the notion of an educational organization as an <u>educational</u> organization. If such an organization exists to educate, then it must be organized and administered to do so. Much therefore turns on what is meant by 'educate'. What ever

else it may entail, such a notion certainly encompasses knowledge of one's condition. The capacity to act rationally, to reason, and make decisions in the light of available knowledge, is the touchstone of what it is to be educated, and if this is to be promoted then the very same conditions must be sedimented into the administrative processes and interactive relationships of the organization. It is clearly unlikely that education will take place if the administration is inimical to it.

The role of the researcher as a mediator of knowledge and action is bound up in administrative praxis. The achievement of rational autonomy, by administrators and staff, freed from domination, must be linked to self-understanding and the way this is limited by unacknowledged conditions of action. The critique of ideology requires rendering the nomological forces of interaction accessible to the participants in interaction so as to offer them the possibility of transforming their self-understanding and changing the circumstances of their organizational life. In the course of self-reflection the members of the organization are able to group and perhaps transform the conditions under which they act through embodying their knowledge of these previously unconscious conditions within the rationalization of their administrative practices. The basis of the researcher's own conduct is perhaps most clearly exemplified as follows:

> The mediation of theory and praxis can only be clarified if to begin with we distinguish three functions, which are measured in terms of different criteria: the formation and extension of critical theorems, which can stand up to scientific discourse; the organization of processes of enlightenment, in which such theorems are applied and can be tested in a

> unique manner by the initiation of processes of reflection carried on within certain groups towards which these processes have been directed; and the selection of appropriate strategies, the solution of tactical questions, and the conduct of political struggle. On the first level, the aim is true statements, on the second, authentic insights, and on the third, prudent decisions.(28)

Self-reflection is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for the achievement of autonomy. While there may be some previously unacknowledge conditions of conduct which are now brought within the capacity of the administrators of an educational organization, there will be others which are not. In the short term the best that can be expected is a consciousness of their determining effects; in the long term there may need to be participation in a sustained political struggle to ameliorate the effects of these on the members of educational organizations, staff and students alike.

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